REMARKS

In the subject Office Action, claims 1-21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over German Patent 2,358,225 to Metzeler or U.S. Patent No. 1,835,575 to Sanders et al. or U.S. Patent No. 1,750,346 to Chilton or U.S. Patent No. 1,940,302 to Humphrey et al. (principal references) in view of newly cited U.S. Patent No. 5,413,374 to Pierce.

The Office Action states that each of the principal references discloses the invention substantially as claimed but does not disclose the sleeveless bushing as defined by Applicants and that "sleeveless" bushing is interpreted consistent with pages 6-8 of the remarks section of Applicants' response dated February 10, 2003. However, it is also stated that Pierce discloses a sleeveless bushing consistent with Applicants' definition wherein the inner and outer sleeves are separate and distinct and directs Applicants' attention to column 3, lines 15-55 of Pierce which allegedly makes such a disclosure.

Applicants respectfully disagree and traverse this rejection. First, it appears that the term "sleeveless bushing" is not interpreted consistent with the remarks sections of Applicants' prior reply or with the present application itself. Second, Pierce cannot possibly teach, suggest or motivate those skilled in the art of the desirability of combining sleeveless bushings with the disclosures of the principal references because Pierce directly teaches away from any use of sleeveless bushings. Third, the principal references do not disclose the

invention substantially as claimed not only because these references do not disclose a sleeveless bushing but also because these references do not disclose other features such as the ribbed, groove, protrusion, slot and hole features of the sleeveless bushings and bushing receiving bores as recited in the claims of the present application; and the addition of Pierce does not change this result.

It appears the definition of sleeveless bushings in the Office Action is interpreted to cover any bushing where the inner and outer sleeves are separate and distinct. Applicants respectfully disagree with this incorrect interpretation of "sleeveless bushing."

Applicants submit that the term "sleeveless" has been adequately defined in the specification and the remarks section of Applicants' prior reply. As previously discussed in Applicants' prior reply, paragraph 3, lines 6-10 of the present application discloses that traditional leaf spring bushings include an elastomeric core that is confined by an outer metal sleeve and that such traditional bushings usually have three layers, including an inner metal sleeve or pin, the elastomeric core and the outer metal sleeve. The outer sleeve classifies this traditional bushing as a "sleeved" bushing.

In addition, Applicants continue to define sleeveless bushings by stating in paragraph 5, lines 3-6, that sleeveless bushings eliminate the outer metal sleeve. In other words, a sleeveless bushing does not include the outer metal sleeve component of traditional bushings. Additionally, a sleeveless

bushing is again described in paragraph 42, lines 3-6 and shown in Fig. 3 of the present application as a bushing without an outer metal sleeve component. The specification is replete with similar descriptions of sleeveless bushings.

Applicants' have been directed to the disclosure in column 3, lines 15-55 of the newly cited Pierce reference for the proposition that a sleeveless bushing consistent with Applicants' definition where the inner and outer sleeves are separate and distinct is disclosed. However, even if Pierce discloses a bushing where the inner and outer sleeves are separate and distinct, which Applicants fail to see in column 3, lines 15-55, such disclosure is not relevant to whether a bushing is a "traditional" bushing or a "sleeveless" bushing.

Indeed, Pierce recognizes what a sleeveless bushing is and discloses such in column 3, lines 31-34. Prior to this disclosure, Pierce discusses the problems associated with traditional bushings. In column 2, lines 46-68 and column 3, lines 1-16, Pierce discloses the difficulties of mounting traditional bushings—bushings with outer metal sleeves—in apertures of suspension components because either the bushing or the aperture is too large or too small or otherwise mismatched such as when the aperture is out-of-round. However, even though Pierce discloses sleeveless bushings as a possible solution, Pierce quite clearly teaches away from any use of sleeveless bushings in column 3, lines 35-44 and concludes that use thereof is "decidedly unacceptable."

As stated above, Pierce discloses sleeveless bushings as a possible solution but one which is nevertheless rejected and discouraged. It is clear that Pierce not only does not suggest or motivate skilled artisans in the application of sleeveless bushings but directly teaches away from such use. Instead, Pierce improves upon traditional bushings by providing an adjustable outer sleeve as disclosed in column 3, lines 59-68 and column 4, lines 1-14. Consequently, since Pierce teaches away from sleeveless bushings it would not have been obvious to one skilled in the art to modify the principal references as taught by Pierce. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of all the claims.

Additionally, there are other features recited in the claims of the present invention which are not taught or suggested by Pierce alone or in combination with the principal references. The claims also recite a sleeveless bushing having an elastomeric portion with ribbed or protrusion portions adapted to fit within the counterpart groove, slot or hole portion of the separate and distinct bushing receiving bore of a suspension component, or a sleeveless bushing having an elastomeric portion with a groove portion in which the counterpart ribbed portion of the separate and distinct bushing receiving bore of a suspension component is adapted to fit within said groove portion, among other things.

All the cited references, principal and newly cited, fail to teach or suggest a sleeveless bushing having an elastomeric

portion with ribbed or protrusion portions adapted to fit within the counterpart groove, slot or hole portion of the separate and distinct bushing receiving bore of a suspension component, or a sleeveless bushing having an elastomeric portion with a groove portion in which the counterpart ribbed portion of the separate and distinct bushing receiving bore of a suspension component is adapted to fit within said groove portion.

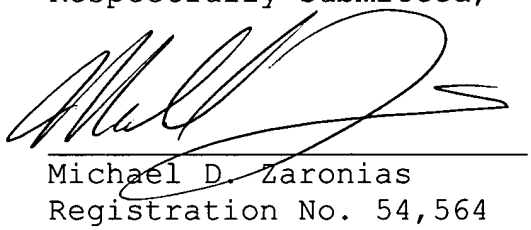
If any such ribbed, groove, or protrusion portion of the elastomeric portion of the sleeveless bushing is shown in Pierce, Metzeler, Chilton, Sanders et al., or Humphrey et al., which Applicants assert is not shown, it is only because the outer metal sleeve compresses the elastomeric portion and distorts it to take a particular shape. In other words, the compression force urges the elastomeric portion of the sleeveless bushing to take the shape of the inner surface of the outer metal sleeve and the outer surface of the inner metal sleeve. This is not however what claims 1, 8, 14, and 18 recite. These claims recite, among other things, a sleeveless bushing having an elastomeric portion with ribbed or protrusion portions adapted to fit within the counterpart groove, slot or hole portion of the separate and distinct bushing receiving bore of a suspension component, or a sleeveless bushing having an elastomeric portion with a groove portion in which the counterpart ribbed portion of the separate and distinct bushing receiving bore of a suspension component is adapted to fit within said groove portion.

Therefore, even if Pierce is combined with all the principal references, this combination still fails to disclose all the features recited by claims of the present application. For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request a notice of allowance of the claims of the present application. Early and favorable action is hereby solicited and appreciated.

It is believe that no fees are due with this reply. However, if a fee should be required, the Commissioner is authorized to charge our Deposit Account No. 50/1039.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael D. Zaronias
Registration No. 54,564

COOK, ALEX, McFARRON, MANZO
CUMMINGS & MEHLER, LTD.
200 West Adams Street, Suite 2850
Chicago, Illinois 60606
(312)236-8500